5 Self and Social Identity

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KEY CONCEPTS

depersonalization
ego depletion
independent self
interdependent self
introspection
personal identity
self and identity
self-awareness
self-categorization
self-complexity
self-concept
self-consciousness
self-efficacy
self-enhancement
self-esteem
self-evaluation
self-knowledge
self-regulation
self-schema
social identity

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter reviews social psychological theory and research on self and social identity. We start with an explanation of the meaning and role of self and identity as social psychological concepts. The remaining part of the chapter is organized around seven prominent themes of the self: self-concept and self-knowledge, continuity of self over time, self-awareness, self as agent and regulatory process, self-evaluation and self-esteem, self-extension and levels of identity, and finally, cultural impact on self and identity.

Introduction

A taste of self

Think first of swallowing the saliva in your mouth, or do so. Then imagine expectorating it into a tumbler and drinking it! What seemed natural and 'mine' suddenly becomes disgusting and alien . . . What I perceive as belonging intimately to my body is warm and welcome, what I perceive as separate from my body becomes, in the twinkling of an eye, cold and foreign.

This juicy thought experiment was suggested by Gordon Allport (1968, p. 28) – a pioneer of social psychology (see Pioneer box, Chapter 14, p. 309) – many decades ago to illustrate the experiential reality of our sense of self. What is associated with or included in our selves obviously acquires a distinct psychological quality very different from that of things dissociated or excluded from the self. Although Allport's (1968) illustration draws on the role of our physical bodies as an anchor of our sense of self, it will soon become clear that a bodily sense is by no means the only, and possibly not even a necessary, anchor of the self. However, the thought experiment nicely illustrates that the notion of self or identity is indispensable as an explanatory concept in order to make sense of otherwise unintelligible variations or even qualitative shifts in human experiences.

Admittedly, the shift from an accepting attitude towards saliva inside our mouth (self) to a rather negative attitude towards saliva outside our mouth (non-self) is a relatively innocuous phenomenon. But remember how you felt about yourself the last time you failed an exam in school, or when you were praised for an excellent performance in class. Also, how do you feel when you go to the stadium to support your favourite football team? Or when you listen to your favourite singer, who always finds the right words to express what you are thinking about life? These are important experiences that can dramatically influence how you see yourself (e.g., you may be ashamed or proud of yourself) and how you behave towards other people (e.g., you ridicule or even attack the

self and identity from a social psychological point of view, self and identity are shorthand expressions for an ensemble of psychological experiences (thoughts, feelings, motives, etc.) that reflect and contribute to a person's understanding of his or her place in the social world

supporters of the rival team). In social psychological terms, your ***self*** or ***identity*** is implicated in such situations. The terms 'self' and 'identity' are used here as shorthand expressions for an ensemble of psychological experiences (thoughts, feelings, motives, etc.) that both reflect and influence a person's understanding and enactment of his or her place in the social world.

It is noteworthy that our subsequent discussion of self and identity reflects two influential traditions in social psychology, one of which is primarily of North American origin while the other started as a distinctly European endeavour. Within the North American tradition, the term 'self' is usually preferred to the term 'identity', and the self is typically conceptualized in rather individualistic terms. This is especially true for the social cognition (or social information processing) perspective, which has served as the leading paradigm of this tradition since the 1970s (see Chapter 4, this volume). To be sure, the social cognition perspective does not deny the social dimension of the self, but it sees the roots of the social self primarily in interpersonal relations, while intergroup relations play a minor role. To the extent that a person's group membership is taken into account, it is usually construed as just another individual feature that, together with the person's numerous other individual features, makes up her unique cognitive self-representation which, in turn, feeds into social information processing. The European tradition, with the social identity perspective as its leading paradigm (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987) and its preference for the term 'identity', emphasizes the pivotal role of group memberships and intergroup relations. It adds another distinct social dimension to identity (or self) in that it focuses on the antecedents and consequences of collectively shared identities (or selves).

The coexistence of these different though not necessarily mutually exclusive traditions with their respective terminologies is the reason why we often use the composite expression 'self and identity', although, where possible, we use either the term 'self' or the term 'identity' depending on the traditional background of the theoretical approaches and research under discussion.

The remainder of the chapter is divided into eight sections. First, we clarify the meaning and role of self and identity as social psychological concepts. The remaining sections deal in turn with the following themes: self-concept and self-knowledge, continuity of self over time, self-awareness, self as agent and regulatory process, self-evaluation and self-esteem, self-extension and levels of identity, and cultural impact on self and identity. We thus review the core classic self-themes (G. Allport, 1955, 1968), but also include more recent research trends (e.g., cultural impact). While an overarching theoretical framework that integrates all of these themes into a single coherent whole has yet to be developed, it may be helpful to read the major sections of this chapter while using the metaphor of the self as a system. That is, a person's self or identity may be likened to an *open system*, with the different self-themes capturing important characteristics of open systems. For example, open systems show patterns of activities of exchange with their external environment, tend towards a dynamic equilibrium, have inbuilt (negative) feedback and self-correction mechanisms, and they develop more components or levels as they expand (for a fuller discussion, see Pettigrew, 1996).

Analogously, the self-concept and related self-knowledge can be viewed as a pattern of recurring cognitive activities such as processing of self-related information or stimulation received from one's social environment. This also makes the cultural impact on self and identity possible. Continuity of self over time can be understood as an instance of dynamic equilibrium, while self-awareness and self-evaluation can function as important feedback mechanisms. These mechanisms, in combination with the self as agent and regulatory process, make self-correction and self-improvement possible. Finally, self-extension and the differentiation of various levels of identity resemble system expansion and the ensuing structural differentiation.

SELF AND IDENTITY AS SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

Is the self the thinker or the thought?
Are self and identity antecedents or consequences of social interaction?

The notions of self and identity suggest that each of us has an answer to the basic question 'Who am I?' What is more, this reflective process seems to require both a subject and an object of knowledge – a complication that has kept philosophers busy for centuries (Viney, 1969). Thus Immanuel Kant (1781/1997) introduced the distinction between self as object (the empirical self) and self as subject (the pure ego), which was further pursued by Arthur Schopenhauer (1819/1995) as the distinction between 'the known' and 'the knower' and later by the philosopher and psychologist William James (1890/1950) as the distinction between 'Me' and 'I'.

Building on these distinctions, the psychologist Gordon Allport (1961, 1968) argued that the 'I' should be sharply segregated from the 'Me' because, unlike the 'Me', the 'I' cannot be an object of direct knowledge (see also Markus & Wurf, 1987, p. 314). Accordingly, Allport claimed the problem of the 'Me' for psychology while consigning the problem of the 'I' to philosophy. Note, however, that James (1890/1950) originally argued against such a

strict separation of the 'I' and 'Me', though not necessarily against an analytic distinction between the two. For James, the words 'I' and 'Me' are grammatical constructions designed to indicate and emphasize different interpretations of the same *stream of consciousness*, namely interpretations either as *thinker* ('I') or as *thought about oneself* ('Me'). In the final analysis, these interpretations would then be inseparable because 'thought is itself the thinker' (James, 1890/1950, p. 401) – just as the river is inseparable from the water.

The distinction and relation between 'I' and 'Me' (knower and known, thinker and thought) is obviously a complex matter, a fuller discussion of which is beyond the scope of this introductory text. As a general guideline, we opt for the view that there is no need to postulate a separate 'I' that presides over or stands behind the objective person experienced as 'Me' (Flanagan, 1994). Rather, it is the whole human organism with its functional nervous system and active involvement with the external world that enables and guides a stream of experience and consciousness. This stream includes the capacity for self and identity, both in the active subject or agent mode (i.e., as thinker or knower) and in the passive object mode (i.e., as thought or known). This is a compelling view for social psychologists because it fits in with the more general assumption, widely shared in the field, that psychological phenomena can be understood as a joint or interactive function of the personal organism's mind and its environment.

Social psychology as a scientific discipline is concerned with human experience (thoughts, feelings, etc.) and behaviour as they unfold in the context of social interaction. As depicted in Figure 5.1, the relation of self and identity processes to social interaction is twofold. On the one hand, self and identity can be viewed as outcomes or consequences of social interaction. On the other hand, they can be viewed as antecedents that guide subsequent social interaction. In more technical terms, self and identity play a dual role as social psychological concepts in that they can be construed both as a dependent variable or phenomenon to be explained and as an independent variable or phenomenon that explains some other phenomenon.

Acknowledging this dual role, social psychologists have come to conceptualize self and identity as a social psychological mediator – that is, as a variable process that takes shape during social interaction and then guides subsequent interaction. For example, during a discussion with fellow students on some political issue such as abortion, gay marriage or genetic cloning, you may come to see yourself (and others) as either pro or con, or even more generally, as either liberal or conservative. This self-view then impacts on your subsequent behaviour in that it influences how you interact with your fellow students as the discussion continues and possibly also how you relate to them in the future (e.g., whom you invite to your next birthday party). Note that this dynamic, process-oriented approach does away with more static beliefs that view the self or identity as a thing or even as a person-like little creature inside the real person (for further discussion, see Simon, 2004).

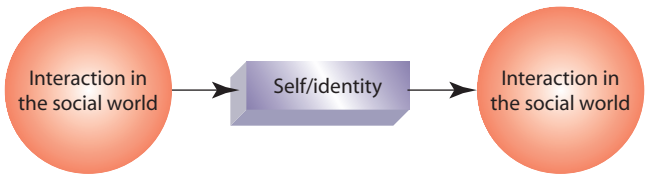

Figure 5.1 *Self and identity as a social psychological mediator.*

SUMMARY

The social psychological analysis of self and identity is concerned with people's answers to the fundamental question: 'Who am I?' In accordance with recent philosophical thinking, the notions of self and identity are used here as shorthand expressions for the variable process of self-understanding which results from the complex interplay between personal mind and social environment. Moreover, this process is viewed as a social psychological mediator which both reflects and guides social interaction.

SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

How is knowledge about ourselves cognitively represented?
What are the consequences of different degrees of self-complexity?
How do we know about ourselves?

self-concept a cognitive representation of oneself that gives coherence and meaning to one's experience, including one's relations to other people. It organizes past experience and helps us to recognize and interpret relevant stimuli in the social environment

Most, if not all, of us would claim to have some idea of who we are. Accordingly, psychologists assume that people possess a ***self-concept***. A self-concept is a cognitive representation of oneself that gives coherence and meaning to one's experience, including one's relations to other people. It organizes past experience and helps us to recognize and interpret relevant stimuli in the social environment. We will illustrate these processes with reference to *self-schema*, *self-complexity* and sources of *self-knowledge*.

Self-schema

self-schema a cognitive generalization about the self, derived from past experience, that organizes and guides the processing of self-related information contained in the individual's social experiences

Markus (1977) introduced the social cognition perspective on the self and suggested ***self-schemas*** as the key components of the self-concept. She defined self-schemas as 'cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the processing of self-related information

contained in the individual's social experiences' (Markus, 1977, p. 64). For example, someone is said to possess an independence self-schema when she considers the feature 'independent' highly self-descriptive and at the same time regards this feature as an important component of her self-description. Such self-schemas can affect how we process information about the self in important ways. More specifically, Markus (1977, Study 1) observed that self-schemas increased both the likelihood that schema-congruent trait adjectives were judged as self-descriptive and the speed with which such judgements were made (see Research close-up 5.1). Markus (1977, Study 2) also found that self-schemas strengthened resistance to schema-incongruent information. That is, people seem rather unwilling to accept information as self-descriptive that contradicts their self-schemas.

Subsequent research by Markus and colleagues (Markus, Smith & Moreland, 1985) revealed that self-schemas also play a role in the processing of information about other people. People with a self-schema in a particular domain seem to have acquired a domain-specific expertise which provides them with an interpretative framework for understanding the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of others. For example, if you have a masculinity self-schema (i.e., you see yourself as very masculine and this attribute is very important to your self-concept), you will be particularly ready to attribute much of other men's behaviour to their

RESEARCH CLOSE-UP 5.1

Self-schemata and how we process information about the self

Markus, H. (1977). Self-schemata and processing information about the self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *35*, 63–78.

Introduction

Markus (1977) proposed that attempts to organize, summarize or explain one's own behaviour in a particular domain will result in the formation of cognitive structures about the self. For such cognitive structures she then coined the term 'self-schema'. Markus further suggested that, once established, self-schemas have important consequences for subsequent information processing about the self. In her first experiment, she predicted that people who have developed a self-schema in a particular domain (e.g., independence) should process information about the self concerning this domain with relative ease. For example, they should judge a greater number of adjectives that are congruent with the self-schema (e.g., individualistic or ambitious in the case of an independence self-schema) as self-descriptive than should people who have not developed such a self-schema. People with a self-schema should also make such judgements faster (i.e., evince shorter response latencies) for schema-congruent adjectives than for schema-incongruent adjectives. Additional predictions were that self-schemas would make it easier to retrieve evidence for past schema-congruent behaviour of oneself and that self-schemas would increase the perceived likelihood of future schema-congruent behaviour.

Method

Participants

One hundred and one female students took part in an initial questionnaire phase, of whom 48 students qualified for a subsequent laboratory phase of the experiment.

Design and procedure

In the initial questionnaire phase, 101 respondents provided a number of self-ratings related to the independence–dependence dimension. From these respondents, three groups of 16 students each were selected to participate in the experimental sessions three to four weeks later. The three groups were (1) students with an independence self-schema (*Independents*), (2) students with a dependence self-schema (*Dependents*) and (3) students with neither an independence nor a dependence self-schema (*Aschematics*). Independents had indicated in the initial questionnaire that they were highly independent and that this attribute was very important to their self-description. The same was true for Dependents with respect to the attribute dependent. Finally, Aschematics had indicated that they were neither independent nor dependent and that these attributes were not important to their self-description.

In the experimental phase, participants were then presented with a number of trait adjectives. In addition to several practice and control adjectives, they were presented with 15 trait adjectives congruent with an independence self-schema (e.g., individualistic, ambitious, self-confident) and 15 trait adjectives congruent with a dependence self-schema (e.g., conforming, submissive, cautious). Following the presentation of each adjective, participants were required to respond by pushing a *me* button if the adjective was self-descriptive, or a *not me* button if the adjective was not self-descriptive. The response latency was recorded by an electronic clock beginning with the presentation of the stimulus. The experimenter thus obtained information concerning both the content and the speed of participants' self-descriptions. In addition, participants were asked to supply specific evidence from their own past behaviour to indicate why they felt a particular trait adjective was self-descriptive, and they were provided with a number of schema-congruent and schema-incongruent behavioural descriptions for which they had to indicate 'how likely or how probable it is that you would behave or react in this way?'

Results

As shown in the top two panels of Figure 5.2, participants with an independence self-schema judged a greater number of adjectives associated with independence as self-descriptive (*me* judgements) than did participants with a dependence self-schema, and vice versa for adjectives associated with dependence. Furthermore, as shown in the bottom two panels of Figure 5.2, Independents were also much faster at making *me* judgements for independent adjectives than for dependent adjectives whereas the opposite was somewhat true for Dependents. Aschematics (people with neither an independence nor a dependence self-schema) judged both types of adjective at an intermediate level and did not differ in response latency for *me* judgements concerning the two types of adjectives. In addition to such content and speed effects, Markus reported that self-schemas facilitated the retrieval from memory of schema-congruent behavioural episodes and increased the perceived likelihood of future schema-congruent behaviours.

Discussion

The experiment provided empirical support for the concept of self-schema and its role in information processing about the self. Self-schemas obviously facilitate self-judgements on schema-congruent dimensions and provide a basis for schema-congruent retrieval of one's past behaviour and schema-congruent prediction of one's future behaviour. In addition, a second study demonstrated that self-schemas can strengthen resistance to schema-incongruent information. That is, both Independents and Dependents were more unwilling to accept schema-incongruent information than were Aschematics. Markus concluded that her findings have important implications also for research on personality. In particular, she suggested that it is people with self-schemas in a particular domain who are most likely to display a correspondence between self-description and behaviour and to exhibit cross-situational consistency in the respective domain.

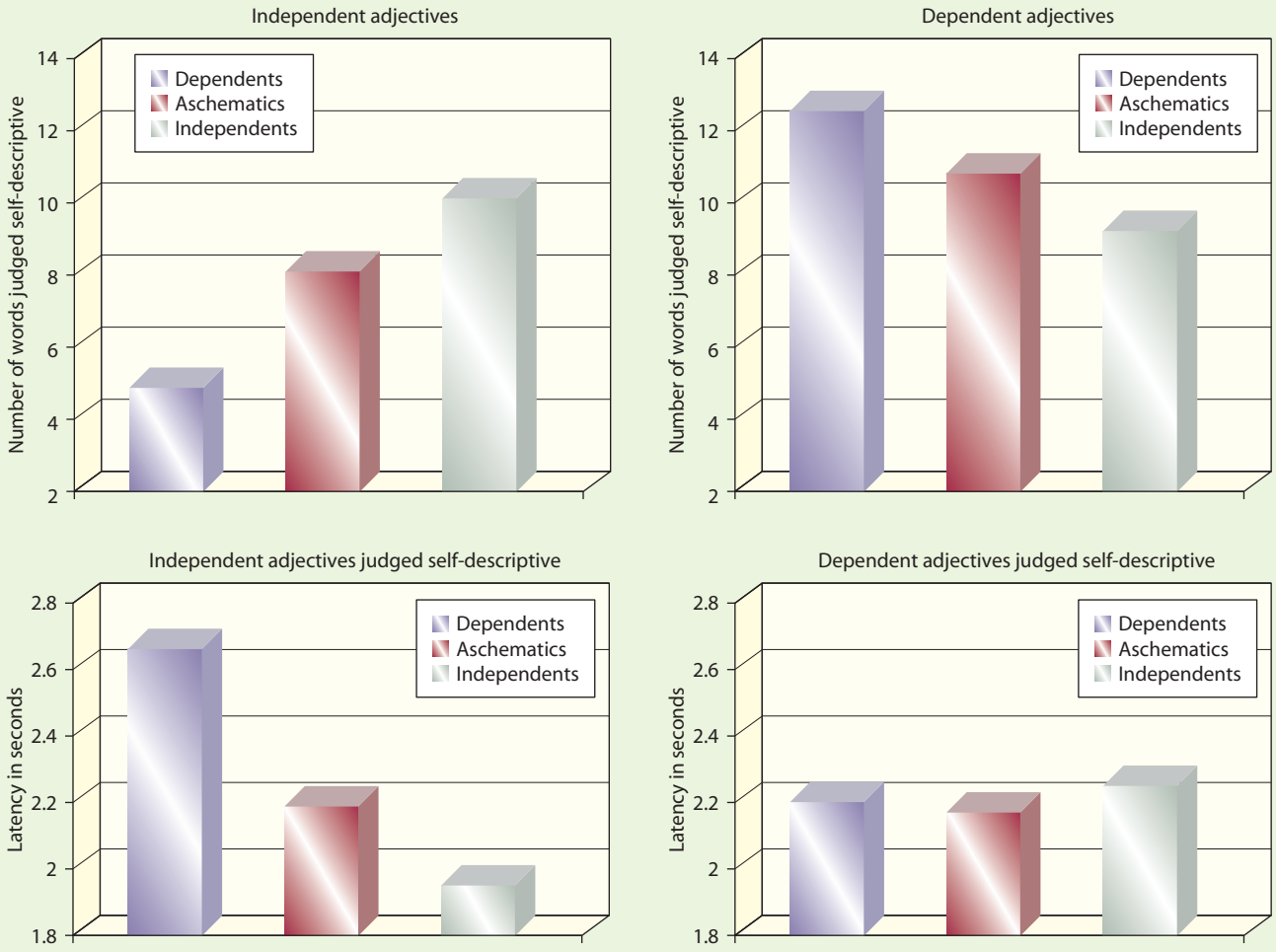

Figure 5.2 *Top panels: Mean number of independent and dependent adjectives judged self-descriptive. Bottom panels: Mean response latency for independent and dependent adjectives judged self-descriptive (Markus, 1977, Figure 1).*

PIONEER

Hazel R. Markus (b. 1949) received her BA from California State University at San Diego and her PhD from the University of Michigan. She has written highly influential articles on self-schemas, possible selves, the influence of the self on the perception of others and on the constructive role of the self in adult development. Her most recent work is in the area of cultural psychology and explores the interdependence between psychological structures, processes and sociocultural environments. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1994 and was then named the Davis-Brack Professor in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. Currently Hazel Markus is a Professor of Psychology at Stanford University. She serves as the co-director of Stanford's Research Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity.

masculinity. In other words, self-schemas provide us with wider pigeonholes when it comes to making sense of other people's behaviour.

Self-complexity

So far our focus has been on the *content* of the self-concept. However, the *structure* of the self-concept also deserves attention. For example, according to Linville (1985, 1987), people differ in the number of independent components or self-aspects that make up their self-concepts and are used for processing self-related information. In short, people differ in ***self-complexity***, which is defined as a joint function of the number of self-aspects and the degree of their relatedness. High self-complexity thus occurs with a large number of independent self-aspects, whereas low self-complexity occurs with a small number of highly interrelated self-aspects. Self-aspects can concern, among other things, physical features, roles, abilities, preferences, attitudes, traits or explicit group or category memberships. Note that the notion of self-aspect is broader than that of self-schema. Whereas self-schemas are viewed as rather stable core components of one's self-concept, the notion of self-aspect also includes less central cognitive categories. For example, I may be well aware of my preference for rock music (self-aspect) without, however, considering it a very important component of my self-concept (self-schema).

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Self-complexity as a structural feature of the self-concept has primarily been examined with respect to its implications for mental and physical well-being. Think of a bad event that recently happened to you, perhaps when you failed an exam or when you were rejected by someone you really felt attracted to. How sad or even depressed did you feel? Now, think of a good event. Perhaps you were praised for a good piece of work or you had a great game in your favourite sport. How happy did you feel then? And how different were your feelings after the good event from your feelings after the bad event?

Research suggests that the extremity of good and bad feelings after pleasant and unpleasant events, respectively, depends on self-complexity. For example, when Linville (1985) confronted research participants either with a success or a failure experience, she found that participants with low self-complexity responded with more positive feelings to the success experience and with more negative feelings to the failure experience than did participants with high self-complexity. In short, low self-complexity was generally associated with more extreme emotional reactions than was high self-complexity, most likely because the self-aspects affected by success or failure (e.g., the self-aspect as a competent student) represented a larger portion of the overall self-concept for people with low self-complexity than for people with high self-complexity.

Research thus indicates that a complex self-structure can protect the individual from emotional turmoil. Just as it may be wise 'not to put all one's eggs in one basket', a more complex self-structure can serve as a healthy buffer against unpleasant experiences and frequent swings in mood – especially when high self-complexity is due to possession of many different positive self-aspects (Morgan & Janoff-Bulman, 1994; Woolfolk, Novalany, Gara, Allen & Polino, 1995).

Sources of self-knowledge

Both self-schemas and self-complexity derive from what we (seem to) know about ourselves. But where does our ***self-knowledge*** come from? A common answer with much intuitive appeal is that people gain self-knowledge through the careful examination of their own thoughts, feelings, motives and reasons for behaving in a particular way. Such ***introspection*** helps to reveal some of the contents of one's consciousness, such as one's *current* thoughts and feelings, but it also has serious limitations and even drawbacks (Wilson & Dunn, 2004). For example, people are commonly motivated to keep unwanted thoughts, feelings or memories out of consciousness. At the same time, the suppressed material continues to influence people even without their awareness. Introspection is therefore at best an imperfect source of effective self-knowledge. Moreover, introspection may even reduce accurate self-knowledge. Wilson and LaFleur (1995)

self-knowledge knowledge about one's own characteristics, abilities, opinions, thoughts, feelings, motives, etc. Introspection seems to be a rather limited source of self-knowledge. Better sources are observation of one's own behaviour, careful examination of other people's perceptions of us and self–other comparisons.

introspection the examination of one's own thoughts, feelings, motives and reasons for behaving in a particular way. It does not guarantee valid knowledge about oneself, but involves a constructive process of putting together a coherent and acceptable narrative of one's self and identity

asked university students to make a number of predictions about their future behaviour during the semester (e.g., going to a movie with a particular fellow student). Before making the predictions, half of the students were required to analyse why they might or might not perform each behaviour. The remaining students were in a control condition and made the predictions without the instruction to analyse reasons. The researchers found that analysing reasons increased the likelihood that students would say they would perform the critical behaviour, but analysing reasons did not alter people's actual behaviour during the semester. This sort of introspection thus reduced the accuracy of students' self-predictions (i.e., increased the discrepancy between self-prediction and reality). People can obviously be misguided by illusionary self-knowledge. Taken together, introspection may be less a matter of excavating valid knowledge about oneself and more a constructive process of putting together a coherent and acceptable narrative of one's self and identity.

A more promising source of self-knowledge may be the observation of one's own behaviour as suggested by self-perception theory (Bem, 1972; see also Chapter 7, this volume). Rather than attempting to gain direct, introspective access to one's thoughts, feelings, motives, etc., people often infer their internal states from their overt behaviours. For example, if I notice that I usually avoid going to big parties and would rather stay at home and read a book or listen to classical music, I might rightly infer that I am introverted. This self-perception or inference process may often correctly reveal internal states of which one was not fully aware before, but it can also go awry in that the existence of an internal state that did not exist before is mistakenly inferred or fabricated. To return to our example, I may actually avoid parties not because I am introverted but because I always like to be the centre of attention. This is pretty difficult to achieve, however, at large parties where so many other people are around. To disentangle genuine self-revelation from self-fabrication is an important task for future research on self-perception as a route to self-knowledge (Wilson & Dunn, 2004).

The people around us can also be a source of self-knowledge. We can learn about ourselves by carefully observing how other people view us. To the extent that others agree among themselves about their perception of us they are likely picking up on something valid about us. Moreover, discrepancies between their shared perceptions and our self-perception may point to traits or motives on our part that we are otherwise unable or unwilling to see.

Direct comparisons with others also contribute to our self-knowledge. According to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), we compare our opinions with the opinions of others, usually people with whom we share a relevant group membership, because such comparisons tell us what opinions are considered correct or valid and should therefore be incorporated or retained as our own opinions. Similarly, social comparisons with respect to achievements or performances (e.g., in our favourite sport) are sought out in order to define and gauge our abilities (e.g., as a football player). As discussed in more detail below (in the section on self-evaluation and self-esteem), the outcome of such comparisons can also have serious consequences for self-evaluation and self-esteem.

SUMMARY

The self-concept and related self-knowledge can be viewed as the patterned activity of processing self-related information or stimulation received from one's social environment. A person's self-concept is characterized both by its specific content, as captured by the notions of self-schemas and self-aspects, and by its specific structure, as captured by the notion of self-complexity. Introspection, observation of one's own behaviour, careful examination of other people's perceptions of us and self–other comparisons are all possible sources of self-knowledge, although introspection seems to be a rather limited, and sometimes even misleading, route to self-knowledge.

CONTINUITY OF SELF OVER TIME

What is the role of memory in self-continuity?
What is the difference between semantic and episodic memory?

Most of us are pretty certain that the person we see in the bathroom mirror in the morning is the same person we saw in the mirror the night before (although, depending on nocturnal happenings, we might not particularly like our image in the mirror the day after). Without this experience of uninterrupted existence or self-continuity, our sense of self would be seriously shattered (Baumeister, 1986).

An important prerequisite for a continuous sense of self is memory. In order to experience self-continuity, I need to remember today what I experienced and did yesterday, and tomorrow I need to remember important experiences and behaviours of both yesterday and today. In fact, the experience of self-continuity and memory are highly interdependent and not completely separable from each other (Klein, 2001). Self-continuity builds on memories of one's past, while memory for one's past is, in turn, dependent on a continuous sense of self because the past must be identified as one's own past.

To further illuminate the special relationship between such a sense of self and memory, Klein (2001) draws on two important distinctions that have been suggested in the memory literature. The first is the distinction between procedural memory and declarative memory (Schacter & Tulving, 1994). While procedural memory makes possible the acquisition and retention of motor, perceptual and cognitive skills, declarative memory has to do with facts and beliefs about the world. Declarative memory is then further divided into semantic and episodic memory. While semantic memory contains general knowledge (e.g., the knowledge that birds have feathers), episodic memory is concerned with experienced events (e.g., your first day at school). Unlike the contents of

Plate 5.1 *Is the person we see in the mirror each morning the same person we saw in the mirror the night before?*

Plate 5.2 *A continuous sense of self requires memory and vice versa: the experience of self-continuity builds on memories of one's past, but the memorized past must also be identified as one's own past.*

semantic memory, the contents of episodic memory include a reference to the self in subjective space and time (Tulving, 1993). Episodic memory thus enables conscious recollection of personal happenings from the past. It should therefore be closely linked to the sense of self-continuity.

Reviewing evidence from developmental, clinical and neuropsychology, Klein (2001) indeed concludes that a breakdown of the sense of self-continuity is usually accompanied by serious disruptions in episodic memory. However, although a loss of episodic memory typically diminishes the capacity to recollect one's personal past, people stricken with a loss of episodic memory, say as a result of brain injury (amnesia) or developmental disorder (autism), are still able to know things about themselves (e.g., who they are and what they are like). This ability is most likely due to an undamaged semantic memory which may after all enable people to know things about themselves without having to consciously recollect the specific episodes from which that knowledge stems. Nevertheless, it appears that episodic memory, though normally in interaction with semantic memory, is chiefly responsible for the ability to construct a personal narrative and to experience oneself as existing through time.

Note that the sense of self-continuity also spreads to the future. Humans seem to be endowed with an inherent tendency to develop, grow and improve themselves (Maslow, 1970; Rogers, 1959) and can envisage future or possible selves along a trajectory of becoming what they have the potential to become (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

SUMMARY

The experience of self over time resembles a dynamic equilibrium – ever-changing, but continuous. This sense of self-continuity is dependent on and not completely separable from memory of one's past, especially episodic memory. It also has a future dimension in that people can conceive of how they may develop.

SELF-AWARENESS

When do we become self-aware?
How does self-awareness affect our behaviour?

Although most of the time our attention is directed outwards towards our environment (Csikszentmihalyi & Figurski, 1982; Duval & Wicklund, 1972), a variety of external and internal stimuli can turn the spotlight of our consciousness away from the environment towards ourselves: hearing one's own voice played on a tape recorder or seeing oneself in a mirror can lead one to observe oneself and become aware of oneself as an object. A similar state can be created by internal factors such as transitory emotions (e.g., negative mood). More generally, ***self-awareness*** is a psychological state in which one is aware of oneself as an object, in much the same way as one is aware of other objects such as buildings or other persons.

self-awareness a psychological state in which one is aware of oneself as an object, just as one is aware of other objects such as buildings or other people

Plate 5.3 *Seeing oneself in a mirror can lead one to become aware of oneself as an object.*

According to Duval and Wicklund's (1972) self-awareness theory, people in a state of self-awareness tend to evaluate their ongoing behaviours, their physical appearance or other personal attributes against internalized standards or social norms. When people perceive a negative discrepancy between the standard or norm and their own attributes, appearance or behaviour, they are likely to experience a feeling of discomfort. Self-awareness theory suggests that there are two ways to reduce such discomfort: (1) 'ship out' by withdrawing from self-awareness (if you can; see Everyday Social Psychology 5.1), or (2) 'shape up' by behaving in ways that reduce the perceived discrepancy (see Figure 5.3). For example, imagine Peter sitting in a café bar at a table in front of his date Caroline, who is sitting with her back to a mirror. During the conversation Peter is constantly forced to look directly into the mirror, thereby viewing himself. In such a situation, one that is quite familiar to most of us, most people either 'ship out' from the state of self-awareness (e.g., they change their seating position so that they no longer face the mirror) or 'shape up' by continually comparing and adapting their appearance and behaviour to relevant social norms or internalized standards (e.g., they act very politely or present their best qualities).

Several studies have shown that heightened self-awareness increases the extent to which people conform to standards. For instance, Macrae, Bodenhausen and Milne (1998) examined the effect of self-awareness on conformity to the standard of suppressing stereotypic thoughts about outgroup members. In a series of experiments, female participants were first put into a state of low or high self-awareness (e.g., by the absence or presence of a visible mirror on the wall in the laboratory). They were then asked to rate different target groups (e.g., male construction workers or male yuppies) on stereotype-relevant dimensions. Heightened self-awareness increased participants' conformity to the social (and most likely also internalized) norm that one should not stereotype others.

Carver and Scheier (1981; Scheier & Carver, 1980; see also Fenigstein, Scheier & Buss, 1975) introduced a further qualification to self-awareness theory. They distinguished between two types of self that one can be aware of: private or public self. The private self derives from internal bodily sensations, emotions, feelings, thoughts and other internal stimulations that cannot be observed by other people. In contrast, the public self is reflected in one's behaviour, speech, physical appearance and other attributes visible to others. People differ in the degree to which they attend to aspects of the private and public self. This dimension has been labelled public vs. private ***self-consciousness***. Individual Differences 5.1 (p. 99)

self-consciousness people differ in the degree to which they attend to private (e.g., emotions, feelings, thoughts) or public (e.g., behaviour, speech, physical appearance) aspects of the self. This dimension is known as public vs. private self-consciousness

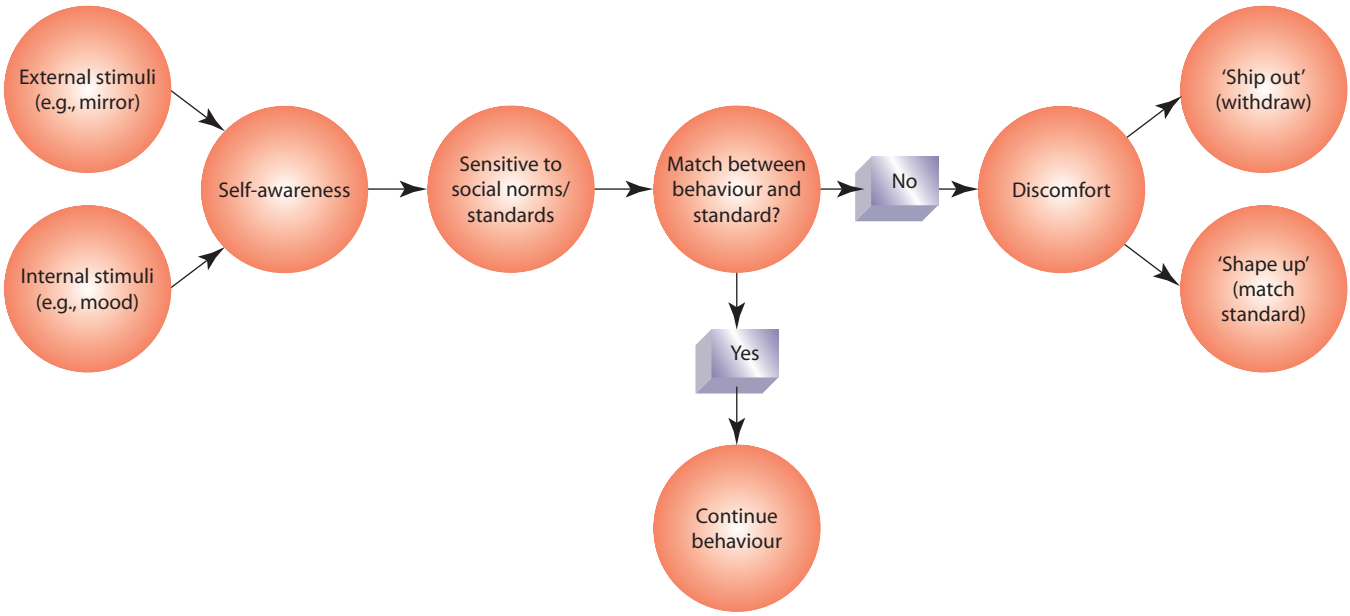

Figure 5.3 *Causes and effects of self-awareness.*

EVERYDAY SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 5.1

Big Brother: Self-awareness and social comparison

In the reality TV show *Big Brother*, several contestants move to a communal house and live there over a period of several weeks. Every single point in the house is within view of a video camera. The contestants are not permitted any contact with the outside world: no TV, radio, telephone or Internet are available. At weekly intervals, the public is invited to vote to evict one of the contestants. The last remaining is the winner. The reality TV show takes its title from George Orwell's book *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in which two-way television screens are fitted in every room so that people's actions are monitored at all times.

Such reality TV shows provide lively illustrations of several of the themes discussed in this chapter. Although the contestants in *Big Brother* may sometimes stop thinking about the presence of the cameras, the whole setting of reality TV repeatedly puts them into a state of self-awareness from which they can hardly escape. They cannot simply 'ship out' by withdrawing from the cameras. Instead contestants are permanently forced to present themselves to the audience in a way that reduces the risk of being evicted. That is, they have to 'shape up' and behave in ways that correspond to the expectations of the audience.

However, not only the contestants' behaviour but also that of the viewers of reality TV shows can be analysed, and thus better understood, in terms of self and identity processes. In particular, the wish to make self–other comparisons appears to be an important motive for watching reality television. Viewers of reality TV shows obviously make comparisons between themselves and 'the stars' of the show. People like to see that there are others who are going through the same life experiences and are making the same (or even worse) mistakes as they do. Such comparisons can improve viewers' mood and possibly also self-esteem. People's need to compare themselves with and to relate to others thus seems to provide a market for TV shows such as *Big Brother*.

SOURCE: C.M. FRISBY, GETTING REAL WITH REALITY TV. *USA TODAY – SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF EDUCATION* (2004). WWW.FINDARTICLES.COM/P/ARTICLES/MI_M1272/IS_2712_133/AI_N6198026

presents example items for the scale developed to measure differences between people on this dimension.

There is strong evidence that type of self-consciousness has important implications for people's feelings and behaviour. People high in private self-consciousness try to align their behaviour with internalized standards (e.g., personal attitudes) in order to maintain or achieve a consistent self-image. People high in public self-consciousness are oriented towards presenting themselves to others in a favourable light. Note that private and public self-consciousness are not mutually exclusive. People can be high in both, low in both or high in one and low in the other.

A related personality variable is the tendency towards *self-monitoring* (Snyder, 1987). This refers to the tendency to regulate one's behaviour either on the basis of external cues such as the reaction of others or on the basis of internal cues such as one's own beliefs and attitudes. Individuals high in self-monitoring are ready and able to modify their behaviour as they move from one social situation to another (see Chapter 6, this volume). There appears to be an empirical relationship between (high and low) self-monitoring and (public and private) self-consciousness. People high in self-monitoring also tend to be high in public self-consciousness, whereas people low in self-monitoring tend to be high in private self-consciousness. Conceptually, however, self-monitoring and self-consciousness emphasize somewhat different aspects of self-awareness. Self-monitoring places particular emphasis on self-presentation skills, whereas self-consciousness emphasizes the focus of a person's attention (see also Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Hoyle, Kernis, Leary & Baldwin, 1999).

SUMMARY

A variety of external and internal stimuli turn our attention inwards towards ourselves so that we become aware of ourselves as an object. Such self-awareness can function as a feedback mechanism which helps us to (re)align our appearance and behaviour with important standards and norms. People differ in the degree to which they attend to aspects of their private or public self and to which they monitor and regulate their appearance and behaviour on the basis of either external or internal cues.

SELF AS AGENT AND REGULATORY PROCESS

How does the understanding of what we are or what we would like to be affect our behaviour?
What are the limits to self-regulation?

People must continually regulate their behaviour in order to survive or, less dramatically, in order to reach desired goals.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES 5.1

Public vs. Private Self-Consciousness

Please indicate how well or poorly each of the following statements describes your personal style. Use the scale presented below the items.

___ **1** I'm always trying to figure myself out.
___ **2** I'm often the subject of my own fantasies.
___ **3** I'm concerned about the way I present myself.
___ **4** I usually worry about making a good impression.
___ **5** I'm constantly examining my own motives.
___ **6** One of the last things I do before I leave my house is look in the mirror.
___ **7** I'm aware of the way my mind works when I work through a problem.
___ **8** I'm usually aware of my appearance.

1 = Extremely uncharacteristic
2 = Slightly uncharacteristic
3 = Slightly characteristic
4 = Extremely characteristic

These items are taken from a scale developed by Fenigstein et al. (1975) to measure differences between people on the dimension of public vs. private self-consciousness. High scores on items 1, 2, 5 and 7 indicate high *private* self-consciousness, whereas high scores on items 3, 4, 6 and 8 indicate high *public* self-consciousness. Note that the full scale consists of 17 items.

self-regulation the process of controlling and directing one's behaviour in order to achieve desired goals. It involves goal setting, cognitive preparations for behaving in a goal-directed manner as well as the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and correction of goal-directed activities

Self-regulation refers to the process of controlling and directing one's behaviour in order to achieve desired goals. It involves goal setting, cognitive preparations for behaving in a goal-directed manner as well as the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and correction of goal-directed activities.

The self is implicated in this process because the understanding of what one is or wants to become is an important determinant of one's striving for goals. Although we often think of goals primarily in terms of material (e.g., goods, services) or interpersonal outcomes (e.g., esteem, love), many, if not most, goals are also instrumental in maintaining or attaining a desired self or avoiding an undesired self. For example, the goal of graduating from university is instrumental in becoming a psychologist.

Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987, 1989) proposes that people's ideas of what they ideally would like to be (ideal self-guides) or what they ought to be (ought self-guides) fulfil an important self-regulatory function. Ideal self-guides comprise our own or significant others' hopes, wishes and aspirations and define what we ideally want to be. In contrast, ought self-guides comprise our own or significant others' beliefs concerning our duties, obligations and responsibilities and define what we ought to be. Ideal self-guides operate in such a way that perceived discrepancies between one's personal qualities and what one would ideally like to be lead to approach as the dominant self-regulatory strategy (i.e., moving closer towards one's ideal self). Failure to resolve such perceived discrepancies produces dejection-related emotions such as disappointment, dissatisfaction or sadness. In contrast, when ought self-guides are in operation, perceived discrepancies between one's personal qualities and what one thinks one ought to be lead to avoidance as the dominant self-regulatory strategy (i.e., staying away from incriminating activities). Failure to resolve these discrepancies produces agitation-related emotions such as fear or anxiety.

In his more recent regulatory focus theory, Higgins (1999) further developed and expanded this perspective on self-regulation. More specifically, he elaborated on two broader motivational orientations – promotion vs. prevention focus. Ideal and ought self-guides are important antecedents of the promotion or prevention focus, respectively, but they are not the only antecedents. Individual needs and situational demands and opportunities also play a role. For example, when you already have a secure job, but come across an attractive job ad that promises better pay, it is very likely that you adopt a promotion focus. You would then be concerned primarily with advancement, growth and accomplishment worth approaching or striving for ('Let's go for it!'). In contrast, your potential new employer, who had just fired your incompetent or lazy predecessor, would very likely adopt a prevention focus. With such a focus, people are concerned with security, safety and responsibility and are motivated to act particularly prudently ('Don't make a mistake!').

The extent to which people engage in self-regulation, and thus emerge as influential social agents (Bruner, 1994; DeCharms, 1968), is strongly related to their beliefs or expectations about their ability to control their environment and achieve important goals (Bandura, 1997). Whether or not people strive for particular goals largely depends on such ***self-efficacy*** expectations. The same is true for effort mobilization. The higher is perceived self-efficacy, the stronger one's effort to attain a desired goal even in the face of obstacles. It is also important to note that self-efficacy expectations are not general beliefs about control. Rather, they are *domain-specific* perceptions of one's own ability to perform behaviours that lead to the attainment of a desired end-state. Hence, in order to predict whether or not a student will work hard to prepare for an exam one needs to know her self-efficacy expectations concerning the academic domain (e.g., 'I can get things organized to do well in this exam') rather than her general beliefs about her ability to control her environment and achieve her goals ('I believe that I have control over my life').

self-efficacy beliefs in one's ability to carry out certain actions required to attain a specific goal (e.g., that one is capable of giving up smoking or doing well in an exam)

Self-regulation is an important human facility, but, as with so many other good things in life, it is not for free. Recent research

suggests that active self-regulation is costly in the sense that it depletes some inner resource, leading to a state of ***ego depletion*** (Baumeister, 2002). More specifically, self-regulation seems to depend on a limited inner resource, akin to energy or strength, that is consumed when the self actively regulates its responses. As a result, the amount of resources the self has available to use for further acts of self-regulation is reduced.

ego depletion a temporary reduction in the self's regulatory capacity

For example, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven and Tice (1998, Experiment 1) found that an initial act of impulse control impaired subsequent persistence at a puzzle task. Research participants were first seated in a room in which chocolate chip cookies were baked in a small oven so that the room was filled with the delicious aroma of fresh chocolate and baking. Participants were then either allowed to follow their impulse and eat two or three cookies or other sweets (no impulse control) or they had to resist the sweet temptation and eat two or three radishes instead (impulse control). Afterwards, participants in both groups attempted to solve a puzzle which was actually unsolvable. As can be seen in Figure 5.4, participants showed less persistence at the puzzle task (i.e., they spent less time on it and made fewer attempts to solve it) when they had used up regulatory energy through prior impulse control (i.e., when they had to stay away from the sweets). There was also a control group who went directly to the puzzle task without the food part. They showed the same persistence as the participants without prior impulse control.

At first blush, these findings seem to suggest that our stock of self-regulatory energy is alarmingly small. However, following Baumeister's (2002) more optimistic reading, such depletion phenomena may actually be indicative of a useful conservation process. Reduced self-regulation after some self-control exercise may not entirely be due to an actual lack of self-regulatory energy but may also be a clever tactic through which the self saves residual resources for later and possibly more important use. Finally, rest and positive affect usually help to replenish the self.

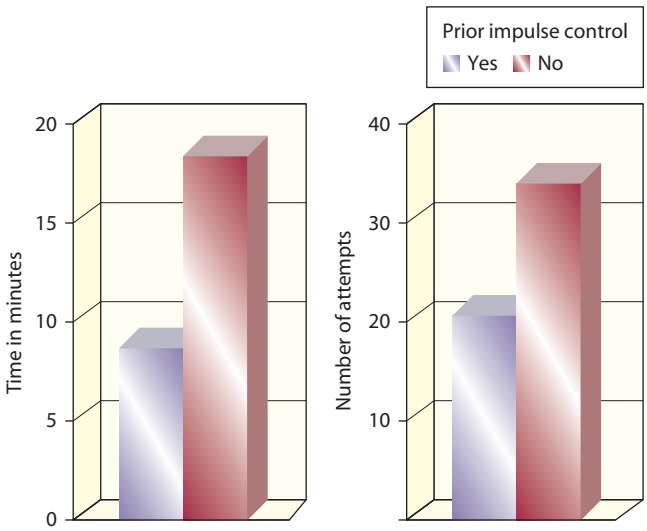

Figure 5.4 *Persistence at a puzzle task as a function of prior impulse control (Baumeister et al., 1998, Table 1).*

Plate 5.4 *How long would you work at a puzzle if you were told to stay away from the cookies?*

SUMMARY

The self's function as an agent and regulatory process is vital for our physical survival and social existence. Perceived discrepancies between what we presently are and what we ideally want or ought to be help us to direct, and if necessary to correct, our behaviour. Domain-specific perceptions of ourselves as efficacious social agents affect our self-regulatory efforts. Self-regulation taxes a limited inner resource, but the self seems to pursue a circumspect conservation strategy and can also be replenished.

SELF-EVALUATION AND SELF-ESTEEM

Why do people strive for high self-esteem?
How is our self-esteem affected when we are outperformed by a close friend?
What strategies do we use to achieve or maintain a positive self-evaluation?

By evaluating our behaviours, physical appearance and other attributes we acquire an attitude towards ourselves and develop

self-esteem attitude towards oneself along a positive–negative dimension

a feeling of ***self-esteem*** which varies along a positive–negative dimension. It seems that people generally strive for high self-esteem. This need for high self-esteem most likely has evolutionary roots. A propensity to high self-esteem or self-love is likely to be selected in evolution because it fosters self-care, which in turn increases the likelihood of survival and reproductive success (Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984). Interestingly, positive ***self-evaluation*** or high self-esteem seems to foster mental health and successful life adjustment, even if it is a 'positive illusion' that does not conform to reality (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Furthermore, because humans evolved in groups and needed each other to survive and reproduce, it is assumed that self-esteem came to function as an important feedback mechanism or 'sociometer' of social relationships – a subjective gauge of interpersonal or intragroup connection (Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Leary, Tambor, Terdal & Downs, 1995). According to this view, an increase in self-esteem signals or reflects an increase in the degree to which one is socially included and accepted by others. In contrast, a loss of self-esteem signals or reflects (the danger of) social rejection or exclusion by others and may thus assist self-correction and social (re)integration.

self-evaluation evaluation of one's own behaviours, physical appearance, abilities or other personal attributes against internalized standards or social norms

Moreover, people actively use various strategies to achieve and maintain high self-esteem. In his self-evaluation maintenance model, Tesser (1988) identifies several antecedent conditions and corresponding strategies, with an emphasis on self–other comparisons. As to antecedent conditions, three variables play a key role: the relative performance of self and other people, the closeness of self–other relationships and the degree to which other people's performance is relevant to one's self-definition. Certain combinations of these variables have a positive effect on one's self-esteem, whereas others constitute a threat to one's self-esteem (Figure 5.5).

For example, when you are outperformed by a close friend on a dimension that is relevant to your self-definition, threat to your self-esteem is imminent. Remember the last time a close friend outperformed you in your favourite subject or sport? It probably didn't feel good. In such situations, people typically resort to one of three strategies: they try to improve their own performance, they distance themselves from the person who outperformed them, or they reduce the subjective importance of the comparison dimension. However, when outperformed by a close friend on a dimension that is irrelevant to your self-definition, your self-esteem is likely to get a boost. Wouldn't it feel great if you had a friend who was a world-class pianist (provided piano playing was beyond your own ambition)? This strategy of associating oneself with successful or otherwise attractive people is also referred to as 'basking in reflected glory' (BIRGing; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980). Thus, in addition to striving for actual success and self-improvement, there are many other strategies that people can use to achieve or maintain a high level of self-esteem. They are called ***self-enhancement*** (or self-protective) strategies (see Table 5.1 for additional examples).

self-enhancement tendency to achieve or maintain a high level of self-esteem by way of different strategies (e.g., self-serving attributions or basking in reflected glory)

As already mentioned in Tesser's (1988) model, the consequences of negative self–other comparisons for one's self-esteem critically depend on the personal relevance of the comparison dimension. In fact, people seem to be particularly vulnerable to unfavourable feedback in domains on which they have staked their self-esteem. Such contingencies of self-esteem (i.e., domain-specific vulnerability of self-esteem) have recently been demonstrated by

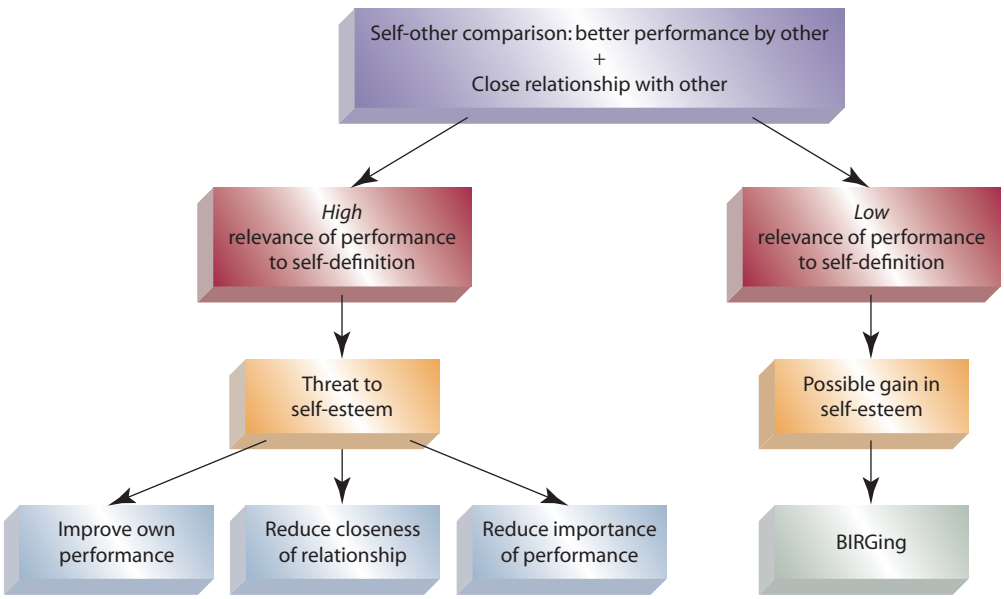

Figure 5.5 *Maintenance of positive self-evaluation: exemplary antecedents and strategies according to Tesser's (1988) self-evaluation maintenance model (BIRGing = basking in reflected glory).*

Table 5.1 *Self-enhancement strategies*

- **Self-serving attributions** (e.g., Miller & Ross, 1975)
  People create attributions that allow them to take credit for success ('I passed the exam because I worked hard') and to deny responsibility for failure ('I failed because the teacher is incompetent').
- **Self-handicapping** (e.g., Berglas & Jones, 1978)
  Sometimes when people anticipate future failure, they actively sabotage their own performance in order to have an excuse (e.g., by partying all night before an exam).
- **Self-affirmation** (Steele, 1988)
  When experiencing a threat to one particular self-aspect, people emphasize other positive self-aspects and thus restore the integrity of their overall self ('I may not be a very good student, but I am a reliable friend').
- **Downward social comparison** (e.g., Wills, 1981)
  People compare themselves with others who are worse off or inferior on a particular comparison dimension ('I may not have done that well in the exam, but look at him, he is an absolute disaster').

Crocker and colleagues for a domain which should be of particular interest to our readers (and the authors of this chapter alike), namely, the domain of academic competence (Crocker, Karpinski, Quinn & Chase, 2003). They examined the impact of grades on daily self-esteem in a sample of male and female students majoring in engineering and psychology. Academic contingency (i.e., the extent to which research participants staked their self-esteem on academic competence) was measured at a pre-test with items such as 'When I do poorly on an exam or paper, my self-esteem suffers' or 'Whether or not I am a good student is unrelated to my overall opinion of myself' (reverse scored). During the main phase of the study, research participants then reported their grades and current self-esteem on a web page at least three times per week for three weeks. The critical results are depicted in Figure 5.6.

As expected, the negative effect of bad grades on daily self-esteem was greater the more students based their self-esteem on academic competence (high academic contingency; see bottom panel of Figure 5.6). The biggest drop in self-esteem was actually observed for female students in engineering who were highly contingent on academic competence. Fear of confirming negative stereotypes about women's ability in the domain of engineering may have been responsible for this amplification. Crocker et al. (2003) also examined the effects of good grades, but this analysis revealed a less consistent pattern. Analogous to the findings for bad grades, there was some evidence that students with high academic contingency were more able to gain a self-esteem boost from good grades. But this was true only if students were in gender-congruent or stereotypical majors (female students in psychology and male students in engineering). In gender-incongruent or counterstereotypical majors (female students in engineering and male students in psychology), however, it was the students with low academic contingency that tended to reap the greater boost from good grades. Perhaps success was so unexpected for those students that it had a particularly powerful surprise effect.

SUMMARY

Self-evaluation and self-esteem, and the associated need for positive self-evaluation and high self-esteem, likely have evolutionary roots. Self-evaluation and self-esteem function as important feedback mechanisms that assist social integration and can spur performance and self-improvement. People also use various self-enhancement strategies to achieve and maintain high self-esteem and are particularly vulnerable to negative feedback in domains on which they have staked their self-esteem.

SELF-EXTENSION AND LEVELS OF IDENTITY

What are the consequences of including others in one's self or identity?
How do personal and social identity differ from each other?
What determines which of our multiple identities is psychologically active in a particular moment?

This self-theme revolves around the *variable* 'range and extent of one's feeling of self-involvement' (Allport, 1968, p. 29). Allport actually considered it a mark of maturity that the self can be extended to include concrete objects, other people or abstract ideals which then become matters of high personal importance and are valued as 'mine' (see also Kohlberg, 1976).

A growing body of research indicates that participants in a close relationship include each other in their psychological selves with important consequences for information processing and behaviour (Aron, Aron & Norman, 2001; Aron, Aron, Tudor & Nelson, 1991). For example, these researchers observed that married graduate students had more difficulty deciding whether a particular trait was self-descriptive or not when they differed from their spouse in the critical trait than when self and spouse were similar in this respect. A possible explanation for this finding is that the spouse was actually included in the psychological self so that self–spouse dissimilarities created cognitive confusion which interfered with self-related information processing (see Chapter 10, this volume).

More generally, self-extension reflects the human capacity to identify with others at different levels of social inclusiveness (family, neighbourhood, university, political party, nation, etc.). Think for a minute about the groups you identify with. How important

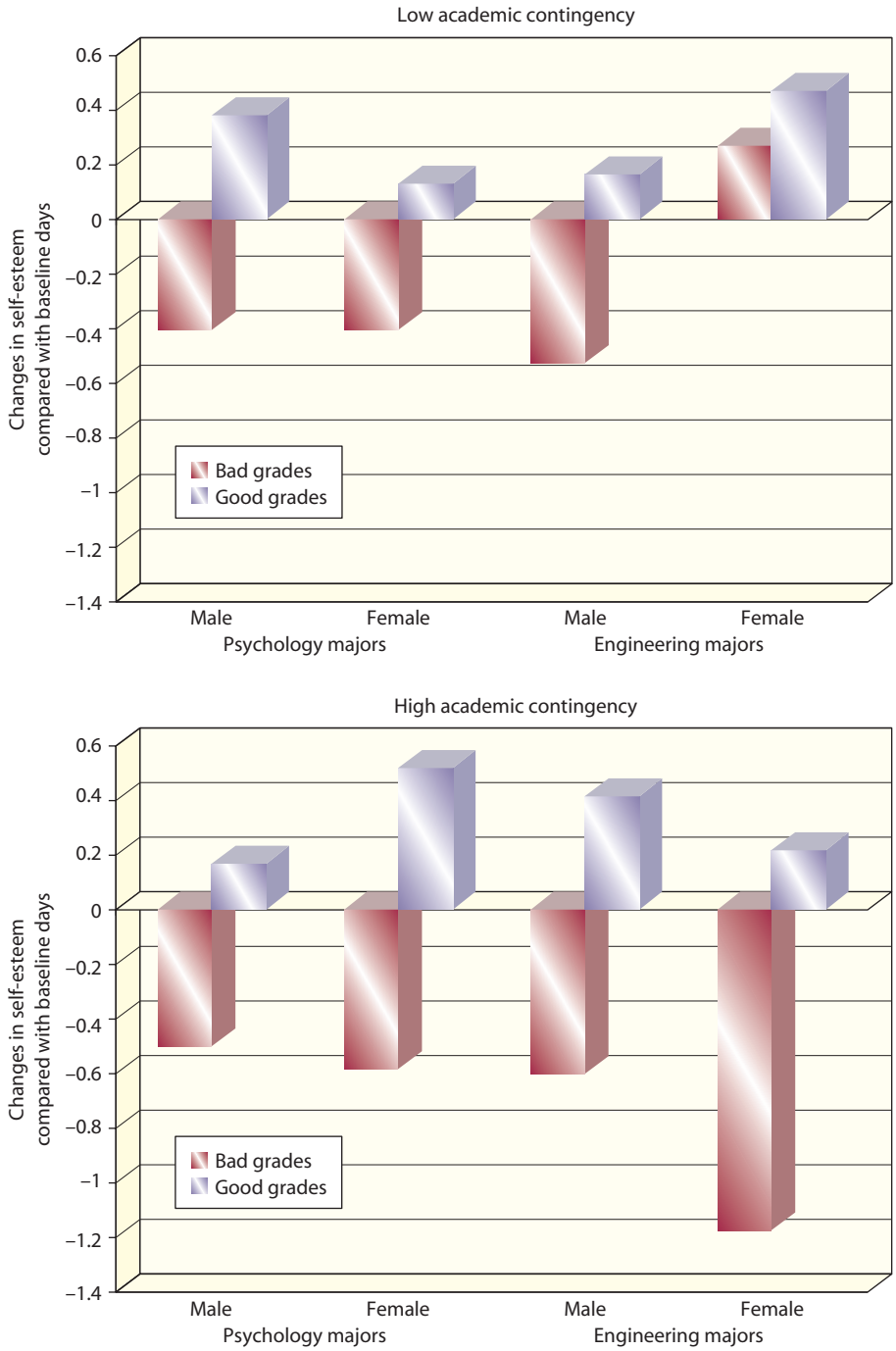

Figure 5.6 *Change in daily self-esteem in response to bad and good grades for students high or low in academic contingency by gender and major (Crocker et al., 2003, Figure 1).*

are these groups to you? For example, how do you feel when your national football team wins a game? What are your feelings when your preferred political party loses an election? Do you feel offended when your university is unfairly evaluated?

The major theoretical and empirical contributions to the study of such social or group identifications have been made or were critically inspired by European social psychologists. Most notably, these contributions crystallized into the social identity theory of intergroup relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987). These two highly influential theories are referred to collectively as the social identity perspective.

The social identity theory of intergroup relations

Social identity theory (SIT) is a theoretical framework for the social psychological analysis of intergroup relations and social change in socially stratified societies (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; Turner & Reynolds, 2001). At the theory's heart lies the idea that categorization into ingroup (a group to which one belongs) and outgroup (a group to which one does not belong) provides the germ for the development of a group-based social identity. ***Social identity*** is defined as that part of a person's self-concept which derives from the knowledge of his or her membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. Social identity can spur intergroup discrimination and other forms of intergroup conflict. More specifically, SIT proposes that, when acting as group members, people have a need for positive social identity and are therefore motivated to positively differentiate their ingroup from relevant outgroups ('We are better than they are!'). Intergroup discrimination can then be a means, though not the only one, to establish such positive ingroup distinctiveness ('The fact that we have and deserve more than they do just shows that we are superior!').

social identity that part of a person's self-concept which derives from the knowledge of his or her membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership

A typical application of SIT can be found in the analysis of the social psychology of low-status minorities or otherwise disadvantaged groups (e.g., immigrants, blue-collar workers, women or gays and lesbians). According to SIT, the disadvantaged social position of such groups confers an unsatisfactory social identity on the respective group members (e.g., Lücken & Simon, 2005; see Research close-up 5.2). This predicament then motivates group members to search for appropriate problem-solving strategies which help them to achieve a more satisfactory social identity. These strategies can range from individualistic strategies of social mobility, such as leaving the disadvantaged minority and joining the advantaged majority (where that is possible), to collective or group strategies of social change, such as collective protest or even revolutionary reversals of status and power relations (Tajfel, 1981; see Chapter 14, this volume).

RESEARCH CLOSE-UP 5.2

Cognitive and affective responses to being in minority versus majority groups

Lücken, M. & Simon, B. (2005). Cognitive and affective experiences of minority and majority members: The role of group size, status, and power. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *41*, 396–413.

Introduction

Many, if not most, real-life intergroup contexts consist of groups that hold minority or majority positions vis-à-vis each other. Lücken and Simon (2005) proposed that knowledge of one's membership in a minority or majority group has important effects on one's thinking and feeling. Their first experiment dealt with minorities and majorities defined in purely numerical terms. The authors made two major predictions. First, because membership in a minority group is a rare self-aspect with particular attention-grabbing power, members of minority groups should display a stronger tendency to be cognitively preoccupied with (constantly thinking of) their group membership than members of majority groups. Second, because numerical inferiority is typically associated with error and deviance or weakness and powerlessness (at least in western democratic societies), people should react with more negative (or less positive) affect when they find themselves in a minority as opposed to a majority group.

Method

Participants

Sixty-one students (28 men and 33 women) participated in the study. Each participant received 5 euros for his or her participation.

Design and procedure

The design consisted of one independent variable with two experimental conditions: minority vs. majority membership. The experiment allegedly examined the relationship between artistic preferences and personality. Participants were paced through a series of paintings presented on a computer monitor and indicated how much they liked each painting on a 50-step scroll bar with endpoints labelled *not at all* and *very much*. Following this task, participants were informed that the paintings they had just rated were paintings by two different painters who remained anonymous and were referred to as Painter X and Painter Y throughout the experiment. The computer then allegedly determined each participant's artistic preference. In reality, all participants were told that they preferred Painter X over Painter Y. They were also told that prior research had discovered that these preferences were correlated with different personality styles. Participants also received a bogus personality profile of a typical ingroup member which was written in an ambiguous

manner so that every participant found him- or herself adequately described at least to some degree.

Participants in the minority condition were told that usually only 10 per cent of people would prefer Painter X, but about 80 per cent would prefer Painter Y (allowing for the possibility that some people may not have a clear preference). Percentages were reversed in the majority condition. To further strengthen the minority–majority manipulation, participants were provided with an alleged update of the preference statistics from the current research project. In the minority condition, they were informed that only 15.7 per cent of the participants preferred Painter X, but 84.3 per cent preferred Painter Y. Again, percentages were reversed in the majority condition.

The main dependent measures, administered after the manipulation of the independent variable (minority vs. majority membership), were: measures of cognitive preoccupation with one's group membership (e.g., 'Since I have learned that I am a member of this group, this thought enters my mind time and again'), affect (e.g., 'At the moment I feel cheerful', 'At the moment I feel sad') and collective identification (e.g., 'I feel strong ties to other ingroup members'). Ratings were made on seven-point scales ranging from *not true* (0) to *very true* (6).

Results

Both predictions were confirmed. As shown in the top panel of Figure 5.7, cognitive preoccupation with one's group membership was stronger for minority members than for majority members. At the same time, minority members reported less positive affect (averaged over positive and negative items) than did majority members (bottom panel of Figure 5.7). Replicating prior research findings, minority members also showed stronger collective identification than did majority members. Finally, additional analyses revealed that minority members' increased cognitive preoccupation with their group membership, but not their affective reaction, was responsible for (mediated) their increased collective identification.

Discussion

The experiment confirmed that minority membership and majority membership have differential implications for group members' thinking and feeling. First, unlike majority membership, minority membership preoccupies group members' minds, thus keeping them focused on their collective identity. Second, compared with majority members, minority members experience less positive (or more negative) affect as a result of their group membership. Taken together, minority members likely experience an internal conflict in that cognitive forces pull them towards their group, whereas affective forces push them away from it. Three additional studies substantiated these results and revealed that (implicit as well as explicit) power differences between minority and majority groups play an important role in the differential cognitive and affective experiences of minority and majority members.

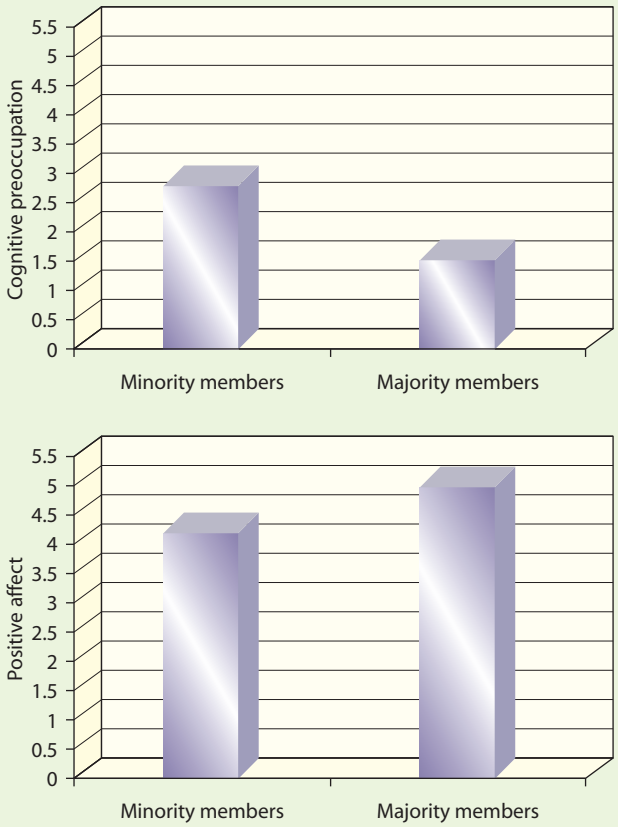

Figure 5.7 *Cognitive preoccupation with one's group membership and affect as a function of minority and majority membership (Lücken & Simon, 2005).*

Self-categorization theory

Turner's (1982) distinction between personal identity and social identity marks the beginning of self-categorization theory (SCT; see also Chapter 11, this volume). ***Personal identity*** means self-definition as a unique individual in terms of interpersonal or intragroup differentiations ('I' or 'me' versus 'you'), whereas social identity now means self-definition as an interchangeable group member in terms of ingroup–outgroup differentiations ('we' or 'us' versus 'they' or 'them'). The theory was then elaborated in greater detail by Turner et al. (1987). It is a more general theoretical framework than SIT. Whereas SIT is not, and was probably never intended to be, a general theory of self or identity, SCT specifies the antecedents and consequences of both personal and social identity. It can thus provide explanations for

personal identity self-definition as a unique individual in terms of interpersonal or intragroup differentiations ('I' or 'me' versus 'you')

PIONEER

John C. Turner (b. 1947), co-author of *social identity theory* and author of *self-categorization theory*, was born in London, England. He received his PhD at the University of Bristol, where he also taught and co-directed the first research program on social identity theory. In self-categorization theory he reconceptualized the nature of the psychological group in terms of his now widely accepted distinction between personal and social identity; he showed that group processes are an emergent product of a change in the level of self-categorization rather than an amalgam of interpersonal relationships. This extremely influential theory has transformed our understanding of many fundamental social psychological phenomena. John Turner moved to Australia in 1983 and is currently a professor of psychology and an Australian Professorial Fellow at the Australian National University, Canberra.

both individual behaviour as guided by personal identity (e.g., individual careerism) and group behaviour as guided by social identity (e.g., collective protest).

self-categorization the formation of cognitive groupings of oneself and other people as the same in contrast to some other class of people

According to SCT, both personal (individual) and social (collective) identity derive from ***self-categorizations***, which are 'cognitive groupings of oneself and some class of stimuli as the same . . . in contrast to some other class of stimuli' (Turner et al., 1987, p. 44). The theory revolves around three major tenets:

1. Identities can be construed at different levels of social inclusiveness.
2. Identities are comparative constructs.
3. Identity salience is a joint function of the person's readiness to adopt a particular identity and the identity's social contextual fit.

We shall explore each tenet in more detail.

First, despite the key status of the distinction between personal and social identity, there are additional layers of hierarchically organized identities. For example, one's social identity as a British or French citizen is more abstract than, and thus includes, one's personal identity as a unique individual. At the same time, one's social identity as a European citizen or even a human being is more abstract and includes one's lower-level social and personal identities (Figure 5.8).

Second, identities are relative constructs that are compared with, and evaluated relative to, contrasting identities at the same level of abstraction, but in terms of the next more inclusive identity.

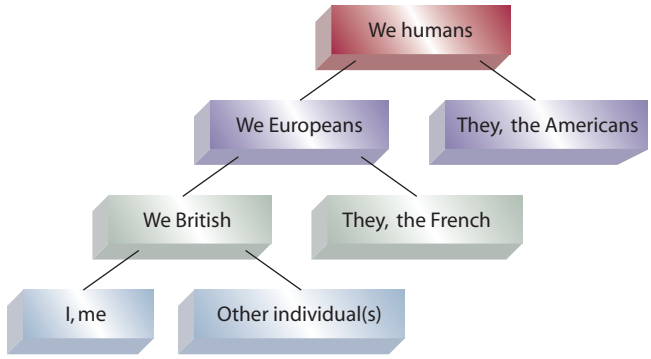

Figure 5.8 *Levels of self-categorization and identity.*

Plate 5.5 *One's social identity as a European citizen is more inclusive than one's national identity.*

For instance, one's personal identity as a unique individual is compared with, and evaluated relative to, the identity of another individual with respect to attributes that (allegedly) characterize the common ingroup in general (e.g., polite for a British ingroup and efficient for a German ingroup). By the same token, one's social identity as a British or German citizen can be compared with, and evaluated relative to, say, Italian citizens with respect to attributes that characterize Europeans in general (e.g., wealthy).

Third, identities vary not only along the dimension of abstraction or social inclusiveness. Another source of variation is the multiplicity of a given person's group memberships even on similar levels of abstraction (e.g., groupings based on gender, sexual orientation, profession or political orientation). People are usually members of many different groups, but not all group memberships are salient (psychologically active) at the same time. Sometimes the authors of this chapter see themselves primarily as males, at other times as scientists, and at still other times as members of a political party. Similarly, the readers of this chapter may see themselves sometimes as men or women, at other times primarily as hardworking students, and at still other times as fans of particular sports clubs or music bands.

According to SCT, identity salience is a joint function of people's readiness to adopt a particular identity and the extent to which that identity fits as a meaningful self-definition within a given social context. Readiness to adopt a particular identity depends on people's general values, changing motives, current goals, prior experiences and so forth. For example, prior experiences of being mistreated because of a particular group membership likely reduce one's readiness to define oneself in terms of the corresponding social identity, if one wishes to escape further mistreatment. However, if one's current goal were to draw public attention to one's mistreatment, readiness for such self-definition should increase. Also, readiness to adopt a particular identity may be influenced by the relative strengths of one's needs for assimilation or differentiation (Brewer, 1991). For example, students at a large anonymous university may wish to join a fraternity or sorority in order to achieve a noticeable identity, whereas in class especially new students may wish to assimilate and blend in with the rest in order not to become an outsider.

The fit of a particular identity as a meaningful self-definition increases with the degree to which observed similarities and differences between people (including oneself) reflect one's expectations and beliefs about 'us' and 'them' (or 'me' and 'you'). For example, gender identity fits well and is meaningful in a situation in which women and men discuss issues of sexual harassment and most women plead for harsh punishment of sexual offenders whereas most men disagree with them and plead for more lenient measures (typical male!).

Although SCT has so far focused primarily on the antecedents and consequences of the salience of social identity, it also contends that the salience of personal identity is governed by the same general principles, but with opposite consequences. The salience of personal identity is similarly construed as a joint function of readiness (e.g., a high need for individuality) and fit (e.g., many perceived differences between people, with each person being relatively consistent over time). But the key difference lies in the consequences of personal vs. social identity salience. A salient personal identity should accentuate the perception of interindividual differences and intraindividual similarity or consistency (e.g., when your personal identity is salient, you might think of the fact that you are a better player than your team-mates, and that you have been all season long). A salient social identity, however, is assumed to enhance the perception of self as similar to, or even interchangeable with, other ingroup members and as different from outgroup members, who are perceived as highly similar to each other. For example, striking workers on a picket line might see each other as very similar, but distinctly different from 'managers', who are all seen as alike. It is this mechanism of ***depersonalization***, associated with a salient social identity, or personalization, associated with a salient personal identity, that is responsible for group behaviour or individualistic behaviour, respectively. Note that depersonalization indicates a shift from personal to social identity which should not be confused with a *loss* of identity – a state other researchers have referred to as *deindividuation* (Zimbardo, 1970).

depersonalization the shift from personal to social identity, entailing the accentuation of intragroup similarities and intergroup differences

Plate 5.6 *Striking workers on a picket line might see each other as very similar, but distinctly different from 'managers', who are all seen as alike.*

Implications SCT offers a distinctive, and often provocative, view of self and identity as a dynamic process. An important implication of this view is that the self is not represented in terms of fixed, absolute properties such as self-schemas (Markus, 1977) or self-aspects (Linville, 1985), but in terms of relational, varying self-categories or identities. Such fluidity in the self-concept has recently been demonstrated by Onorato and Turner (2004) with a modified version of the research paradigm introduced by Markus (1977) and described in Research close-up 5.1. The critical modification concerns the salience of research participants' social as opposed to personal identity. More specifically, Onorato and Turner (2004) made participants' gender identity highly salient (i.e., social identity as either women or men) and predicted that self-descriptions would then reflect this identity and the associated (self-)stereotypes. Because independence and dependence are a part of the gender stereotype for men and women, respectively, men should generally describe themselves as independent and women should generally describe themselves as dependent. Conversely, individual independence and dependence self-schemas should have no effect because they are more closely tied to personal identity.

Like Markus (1977), Onorato and Turner divided their research participants into Independents, Dependents and Aschematics, depending on whether they possessed an independence or dependence self-schema or neither. The subsequent self-description task included several adjectives associated with either independence or dependence. However, instead of 'me/not me' judgements, the self-description task now required 'us/them' judgements where 'us' referred to the more inclusive category 'women' for female participants and 'men' for male participants. Onorato and Turner (2004, Study 1) found that, as predicted, once gender identity was salient, males endorsed more independent adjectives than dependent adjectives, while the opposite was true for females. Response latencies also supported SCT. Males were significantly faster to respond in an independent than in a dependent manner, and the opposite was again true for females. There

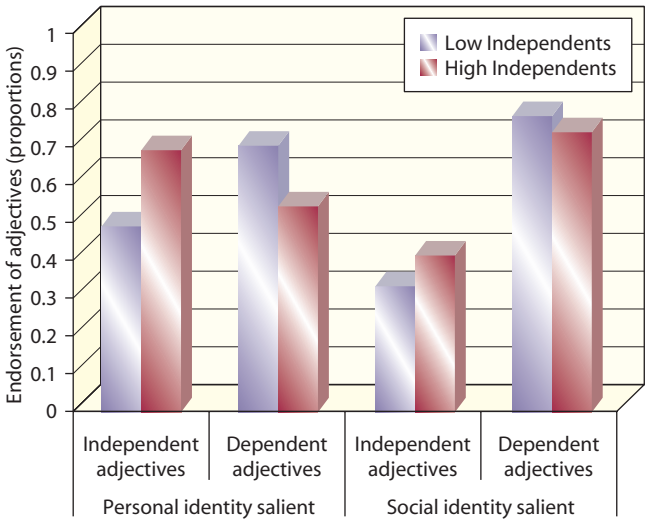

Figure 5.9 *Effects of self-schemas as a function of the salience of personal identity or social identity as women (Onorato & Turner, 2004, Table 1).*

was no effect of individual self-schemas, either on schema-relevant 'us/them' judgements or on the corresponding response latencies. Social identity obviously wiped out the effects of personal identity. In a second study with an all-female sample, Onorato and Turner (2004, Study 2) also included a base-line condition similar to that in Markus (1977) in which personal identity was salient and 'me/not me' judgements were required. In this condition, they found an effect of individual self-schemas, with consistent differences between Low and High Independents. However, this effect was again wiped out when social identity (as women) was made salient (Figure 5.9).

These results should caution us against equating the self-concept or its core with self-schemas or any other type of *fixed* self-aspect. Instead, they make out a strong case for the distinction between personal and social identity and the resulting fluidity of the self-concept. This is not to deny that the self and identity can be experienced as stable. However, SCT suggests that such self-continuity reflects more the stability in the parameters of the dynamic self-categorization process than a fixed underlying cognitive structure. In other words, the experience of self-continuity is a sign that the self-categorization process receives rather stable input (e.g., from the social environment) and therefore produces a stable output. If everybody continually treats me as a professor, no wonder I keep seeing myself as a professor.

Finally, the social identity perspective in general and SCT, with its distinction between personal identity and social identity, in particular have important implications also for the other self-themes discussed so far. Thus self-awareness can no longer be limited to a self defined primarily in terms of personal identity, with the bodily sense as a lifelong anchor (Allport, 1968). Social identity can also be the object or focus of self-awareness, and such self-awareness can involve both private and public aspects of one's social identity (e.g., one's private feelings and thoughts as a group member or one's public appearance and behaviour as a group member). Moreover, social identity plays a critical role as agent and regulatory process, especially in group contexts, and the analysis of self-evaluation and self-esteem can fruitfully be extended from the level of personal to social identity. Just as *I* as an individual person behave in terms of my *personal* identity and want to be seen in a positive light, so *we* as a group enact our *social* identity and strive for positive collective self-esteem (see Chapter 14, this volume). In fact, in extreme cases of intergroup conflict, self-sacrificial death can be sought out as the highest form of self-fulfilment (Taarnby, 2002), earning one esteem and the admiration of one's fellow in-group members – or condemnation as a terrorist when outgroup members are making the judgement.

SUMMARY

Self and identity expand by extending their psychological range. Close others or even entire groups and categories of people then become integral parts of one's self and identity, with important consequences for information processing and behaviour. Self-categorization theory further specifies different levels of identity that vary in social inclusiveness and form a hierarchical structure. Its central distinction between personal and social identity greatly enriched the traditional analysis of self and identity.

CULTURAL IMPACT ON SELF AND IDENTITY

How does culture shape our self and identity?
How do self and identity contribute to cross-cultural differences?

In a sense, culture functions like a broad social group that provides its members with a set of often implicit normative tasks one has to fulfil to be a good person. At a very general level, individualistic western cultures are distinguished from collectivistic eastern cultures (Triandis, 1995), although the classification of entire nations or even transnational regions on a simple collectivism–individualism dimension is becoming increasingly difficult owing to the entities' internal complexity and general globalization processes. Nevertheless, key elements that are typical of collectivistic cultures are subordination of individual goals to group goals and achievement aimed at improving the position of one's group. Conversely, primacy of individual goals and achievement aimed at improving one's own position as an individual are usually considered key elements of individualistic cultures.

Cultural differences have also been suggested with regard to the content and structure of people's selves and identities (Kashima, Kashima & Aldridge, 2001). A prominent distinction is that between independent self-construal in individualistic cultures and interdependent self-construal in collectivistic cultures

independent self self as an autonomous entity defined predominantly in terms of abstract, internal attributes like traits, abilities and attitudes

interdependent self self construed as socially embedded and defined predominantly in terms of relationships with others, group memberships and social roles

(Markus & Kitayama, 1991; also Rhee, Uleman, Lee & Roman, 1995). According to this approach, the ***independent self*** is construed as an autonomous entity defined predominantly in terms of abstract, internal attributes like traits, abilities and attitudes. The ***interdependent self***, in contrast, is construed as socially embedded and defined predominantly in terms of relationships with others, group memberships and social roles.

Note that the distinction between independent and interdependent selves is not exactly the same as the distinction between independence and dependence self-schemas as suggested by Markus (1977). First, the interdependent self stands for mutual dependence of self and other, whereas a dependence self-schema points to a more unilateral dependence of oneself on others. Second, the distinction between independent and interdependent selves revolves around the extent to which the overall self reflects independence or interdependence, whereas the distinction between independence and dependence self-schemas revolves around the extent to which the specific content of some components of one's self-concept signifies independence or dependence.

Research suggests a number of important cultural differences in cognition, emotion and motivation that may be accounted for by the distinction between independent and interdependent self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). For example, the tendency to perceive behaviour as the consequence of internal attributes of the person – a tendency that appears to be particularly characteristic of individualistic cultures – may be linked to the prominent role of internal attributes in independent self-construal so prevalent in individualistic cultures (see Chapter 3, this volume). Markus and Kitayama (1991) also discuss evidence that independent self-construal underlies the motivation to confidently display and express one's strengths in individualistic cultures, whereas, in collectivistic cultures, interdependent self-construal promotes the appreciation of modesty and self-restraint. Obviously, these cross-cultural differences are due to culture-specific socialization, for children increasingly incorporate the respective cultural ideals of their society as they grow older (Yoshida, Kojo & Kaku, 1982).

More recently, an innovative line of research has emerged that demonstrated that independent and interdependent self-construals can also be primed *within* a culture with consequences that mirror those found between cultures. For example, Gardner, Gabriel and Lee (1999, Experiment 1) primed European-American students with either independence or interdependence and then presented them with a values inventory including both individualistic values (e.g., freedom and living an exciting life) and collectivistic values (e.g., family safety and respect for elders). The researchers used two different methods of priming. One method required research participants to read a story that described an army general behaving either in an independent or interdependent way. The other method required participants to circle either independent pronouns ('I' or 'mine') or interdependent pronouns ('we' or 'ours'). Both priming methods were equally effective. More importantly, it was predicted and found that participants who were primed with interdependence gave higher endorsements to collectivistic than individualistic values, whereas the opposite was true for participants primed with independence (see Figure 5.10). Similarly, Kühnen, Hannover and Schubert (2001) showed that participants from individualistic cultures shifted towards more context-dependent thinking when primed with interdependence. For example, these participants then needed more time to discern smaller geometrical figures embedded in complex visual patterns.

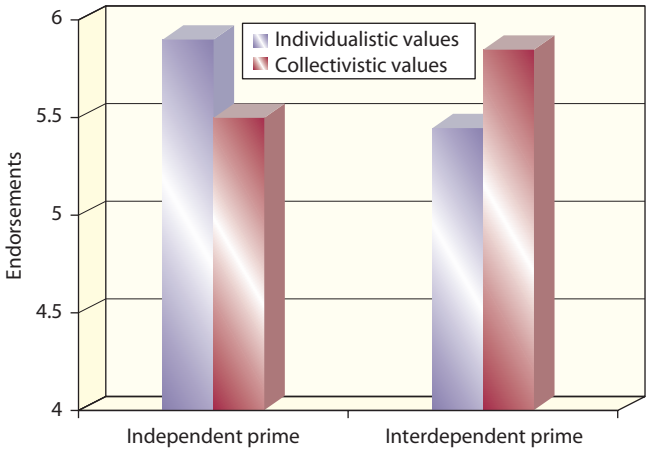

Figure 5.10 *Endorsements of individualistic and collectivistic values as a function of prime in a sample of European-American students (Gardner et al., 1999, Figure 1).*

Taken together, it appears that cultural differences in cognition, emotion, motivation and behaviour may ultimately be explainable in terms of more general self-processes. According to this view, culture-specific social conditions first activate different self-construals or identities which then mediate differential modes of thinking, feeling and acting. To the extent that a particular self-construal or identity is deeply ingrained in us as the result of our socialization in a particular culture, it will be chronically active resulting in characteristic habits of thinking, feeling and acting.

SUMMARY

As an open system that is amenable to external influences, one's self or identity is shaped by the surrounding culture. A prominent distinction is that between independent self-construal prevalent in individualistic cultures and interdependent self-construal prevalent in collectivistic cultures. Both types of self-construal have been linked to characteristic modes of thinking, feeling and acting. They are typically the result of socialization in a given culture, but shifts from one type to the other can also be effected within a single culture.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- Social psychologists conceptualize self and identity as a social psychological mediator – a variable process that takes shape during social interaction and then guides subsequent interaction.
- A self-concept is a cognitive representation of oneself that gives coherence and meaning to one's experiences, including one's relations to other people. People's self-concepts differ in content (self-schemas) and structure (self-complexity). We gain self-knowledge through observation of our own behaviour, careful examination of other people's perceptions of us and self–other comparisons.
- We usually experience uninterrupted existence or continuity of self over time. The experience of self-continuity is closely linked to episodic memory, which includes knowledge of personal happenings in the past.
- Through a variety of stimuli we can become aware of ourselves as an object. In such a state of self-awareness, we tend to evaluate our behaviour or personal attributes against social norms or internalized standards.
- We must continuously regulate our behaviour in order to reach desired goals. Self-regulation involves goal setting, cognitive preparations for behaving in a goal-directed manner as well as the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of goal-directed activities.
- Through evaluating our behaviour and attributes we develop self-esteem. People try to achieve or maintain high self-esteem by way of different self-enhancement strategies, such as self-serving attribution or downward social comparison.
- Two major levels of self or identity can be distinguished: personal identity as an individual defined in terms of interpersonal or intragroup differentiations, and social identity as a group member defined in terms of ingroup–outgroup differentiations.
- Self-categorization theory (SCT) offers a comprehensive framework for the analysis of identity that specifies the antecedents and consequences of both personal and social identity.
- Self and identity are shaped by the surrounding culture. Important cross-cultural differences in cognition, emotion, motivation and behaviour can be linked to the distinction between independent self-construal in individualistic cultures and interdependent self-construal in collectivistic cultures.

Suggestions for further reading

Baumeister, R.F. (1998). The self. In D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (4th edn, Vol. 1, pp. 680–740). New York: McGraw-Hill. Comprehensive overview of social psychological research on the self from the North American perspective.

Brewer, M.B. & Hewstone, M. (Eds.) (2004). *Self and social identity*. Oxford: Blackwell. An edited collection of chapters with contributions from leading researchers representing the diversity of approaches to self and identity.

Simon, B. (2004). *Identity in modern society: A social psychological perspective*. Oxford: Blackwell. An integrative approach to individual and collective identity and their antecedents and consequences.

Turner, J.C., Hogg, M.A., Oakes, P.J., Reicher, S.D. & Wetherell, M.S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Oxford: Blackwell. A classic which shaped the agenda for generations of scholarly inquiry on social identity processes.